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SUBJECT: MIXED REVIEWS FROM EL FASHER ON U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY'S VISIT

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Reviews are mixed in parts of Darfur about Special Envoy Williamson's June 3 suspension of bilateral talks with the Government of Sudan (GoS). However, most people tend to agree that the GoS will use this action as a pretext for further disingenuous behavior in its dealings with the international community, particularly on issues like UNAMID deployment. END SUMMARY.

REBEL MOVEMENTS REJOICE

12. (SBU) Anti-GoS armed opposition groups lauded the Special Envoy's action. One JEM field commander, speaking from Tine in West Darfur, proclaimed that "Now you are just like us" in our mutual mistrust of the GoS. The JEM rep said his movement was happy with the outcome of the talks, as they obviously opened the Special Envoy's eyes to the disingenuousness of the GoS toward anything other than a military solution to solve Sudan's problems.

13. (SBU) An El Fasher-based representative of Sudan Liberation Movement/Minni Minawi saw the Special Envoy's "anger" with the GoS as leading to positive action by the GoS with regard to Abyei, albeit only after the Special Envoy's departure from Sudan. On this Abyei agreement signed on June 8 between the NCP and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the SLA/MM rep sniffed that as with all things the GoS signed up to, the proof would be in the implementation. He also pointed out how the media are spinning the Special Envoy's suspension, using face-saving techniques to imply that talks would re-start between the GoS and the USG and that deals would be made.

UNAMID NOTICE NOTHING NOW

14. (SBU) Leadership of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) reported that it has neither witnessed nor experienced any backlash from the Special Envoy's walk-out. Force Commander GEN Agwai predicted that there would likely be more reaction in the weeks ahead, and he did not dispute the link between the talks' suspension and the expulsion of PAE from Darfur. The Chief of Planning agreed that the decision not to renew PAE's contract is a by-product of the suspended talks and worried that this departure would be disastrous for the peacekeeping mission.

15. (SBU) NOTE: On PAE's departure from Darfur, a lawyer for the UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) told FieldOff on June 10 that the UN Department of Field Support (DFS) wrote a letter on June 5 to UNAMID informing that PAE's contract would expire July 14 and that the UN has no intention of renewing it. The UNMIS lawyer confirmed that the UN has no alternative in place to assume PAE's responsibilities, which constitute the only viable engineering capabilities that UNAMID has. Further, he reported that Mohamed Yonis as UNAMID Director of Administration has done nothing to prepare for this eventuality and is not directing the Mission support staff to find alternatives. The UNMIS lawyer predicted it would be a year before a substitute for PAE could be identified and put in place. Even

then it would have to start from scratch with regard to super-camp construction, since things would have stood still until that point, given the "immature" quality of local commercial contractors available to do the job on an interim basis.

¶6. (SBU) The UNMIS lawyer expects UNAMID to appeal to UNMIS for this kind of engineering assistance, which UNMIS is both unable and unwilling to provide, given its own limited capacities and competing mission priorities. He predicted that UNMIS will actively oppose any campaign for this kind of assistance, a campaign likely to get underway during negotiations for UNAMID's mandate renewal by July ¶31. END NOTE.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES

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¶7. (SBU) Khaleel Adam Mohammed Bakheet Tukras, spokesman of the National Umma party in North Darfur, said that it was "smart" of the Special Envoy to walk away from the talks with the GoS. In Tukras' estimation, doing so showed the GoS that the U.S. would not accept any insincerity or false statements regarding important matters like Abyei.

¶8. (SBU) Ahmed Saeed Uthman, a member of Umma Reform and Renewal, said that most fellow party members were disappointed with the suspension of the bilateral talks. He said that the USG was always criticizing Darfur faction leaders for refusing to negotiate, violating as they were the USG's call for resolving disputes through negotiations. What the U.S. Special Envoy did on June 3 in Khartoum contradicted this stance, according to Uthman. "Leaving the negotiation table was not diplomatic behavior," he charged, and warned that having done so may create negative repercussions for U.S. INGOs and personnel in Sudan.

¶9. (SBU) Fathiya Abdala Gad Al Kareem, a primary school teacher in El Fasher and a member of the Democratic Unionist Party's Women's Union, said that Darfurians had had high expectations for the Special Envoy's visit, including expediting UNAMID deployment, furthering protection of IDPs and civilians, and improving bilateral relations. She considered that suspension of talks meant none of the expected things is going to happen since the GoS now will "ruin the U.S presence in the country", which, she speculated, could extend to the closing of the U.S. El Fasher field presence.

¶10. (SBU) Opposition parties in the North Darfur Legislative Council think that in general the U. S. Administration should be very tough in dealing with the GoS, particularly with the National Congress Party (NCP). They therefore regarded the Special Envoy's suspension of talks as a good way to send a message to the GoS that while the international community may not seem serious about issues concerning Sudan, the U.S. is.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY

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¶11. (SBU) Imam Umar, the organizer of youth sports activities in El Fasher, discussed the issue with the youth in the town, and most of the youth agreed that the GoS would consider the Special Envoy's suspension of talks as an excuse to return the favor by refusing future talks with the U.S. and any calls for the GoS to abide by existing agreements which it has signed. Umar noted that Presidential Advisor Nafie Al Nafie had already made a statement to this effect on the national radio station: that walking away from a meeting with senior GoS officials was behavior unbecoming for a meeting with GoS officials and that the GoS has the full right to respond. Umar predicted that the GoS would tighten regulations for U.S staff in Sudan, particularly in Darfur [NOTE: As of this writing, FieldOffs have experienced no backlash as a result of the suspension of bilateral talks. END NOTE].

#### COMMENT

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¶12. (SBU) Justified or not, there is sentiment in Darfur that the Special Envoy's suspension of bilateral talks with the GoS contributed to the backlash against PAE, particularly since the Sudanese PermRep's announcement of its expulsion came only two days after the walk-out. However, it seems that DFS contributed much to the decision not to keep PAE on, and an explanation for such a poorly timed decision is more than merited. The UNMIS lawyer recommended as a possible solution (bearing in mind that he does not

want UNMIS to assume UNAMID's burden) that the UN quietly allow PAE to stay on through the end of the year, with the necessary political heavy lifting done by the international community with the GoS to convince it to keep quiet about PAE until UN contracting procedures kick in. China could potentially be useful in this regard, since it will not likely want its 140 under-equipped engineers in Nyala to carry the whole engineering burden for the Mission. END COMMENT.

DATTA